

The *7 Elements* of a Differentiated Writing Lesson

The Seven Elements

Skill/Trait Focus
Mentor Text
Graphic Organizer
Student Choice
Teacher/Student
Writing Models
Students Talk
about Process
Real Revision



Mentor Texts:

One of the Seven Elements of
a Differentiated Writing
Lesson

Corbett Harrison (<http://corbettharrison.com>)

Northern Nevada Writing Project (<http://nnwp.org>)

Northwest Regional Professional Development Program (<http://nwrpdp.com>)

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You're looking at a partial version of the "Mentor Text PowerPoint Presentation" Corbett does during his two-day professional development workshop: *The Seven Elements of a Differentiated Writing Lesson*.

In Northern Nevada, Corbett provides this workshop free-of-charge to any school that requests his services as part of his August 30 -June 1 contract with Nevada's State Department of Education.

During June, July, and August, Corbett is available for hire to provide his two-day workshop for schools or districts outside of Northern Nevada. You may contact Corbett at his website for details.

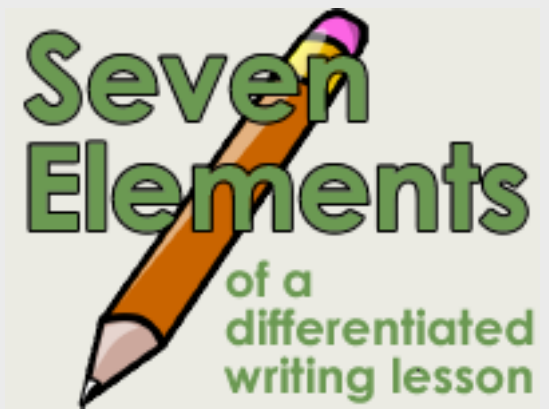
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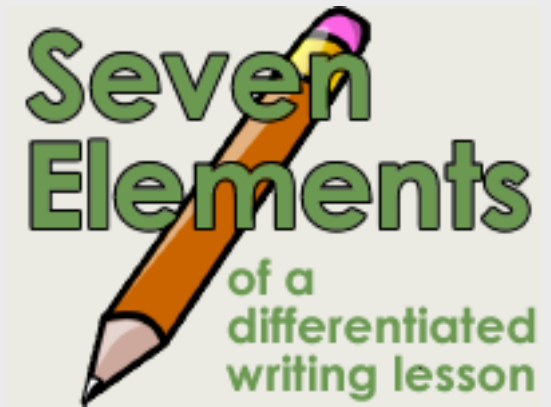
Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



Mentor Text, a definition: a published piece of writing whose idea, whose structure, or whose written craft techniques can be discussed by student writers during a writing lesson for the purpose of inspiring them. I believe there are three types of these texts.

idea mentor texts	structure mentor texts	craft mentor texts
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.	This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can “borrow” to write about their own unique ideas.	This mentor text contains well-crafted writing with techniques that can be discussed and imitated by student writers.

Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



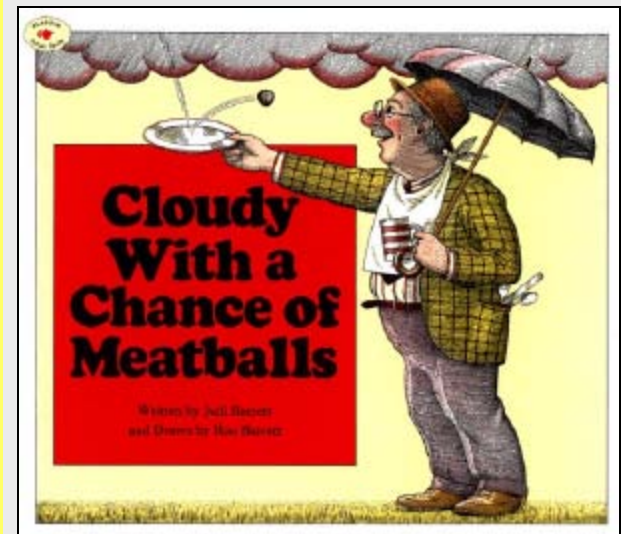
Here is my 1st example of an idea mentor text...

**idea
mentor texts**

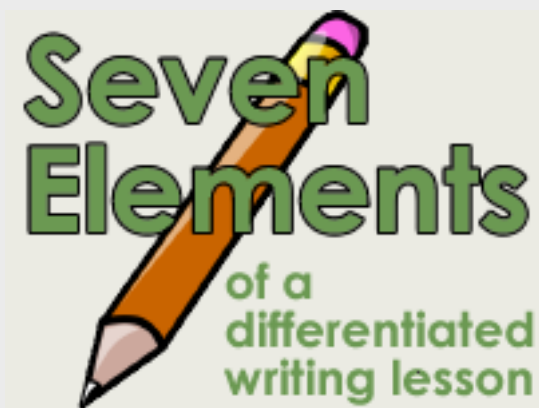
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs is a fun story about the land of Chew-and-Swallow, where it rains different foods for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. This is a unique idea that can be used to inspire original ideas!

You might, for example, challenge your students to write about an original day in the land of Chew-and-Swallow, using foods that were not used in the original text. Or you might invent an original land where something *else* unusual rains from the sky.



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Here is my 2nd example of an idea mentor text...

**idea
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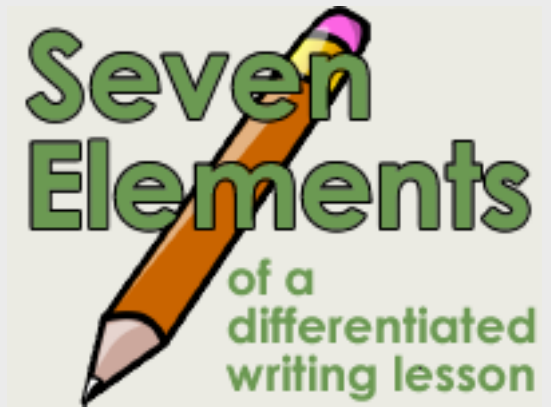
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The most memorable chapter from Homer Price has to be the chapter about the automatic doughnut machine that goes a little haywire, making way too many doughnuts. An automatic food-making machine is a unique idea!

You could have your students create original written descriptions about automated machines that they wish they owned. You could even have kids draw and then “market” their original machines to each other!



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Here is my 3rd example of an idea mentor text...

**idea
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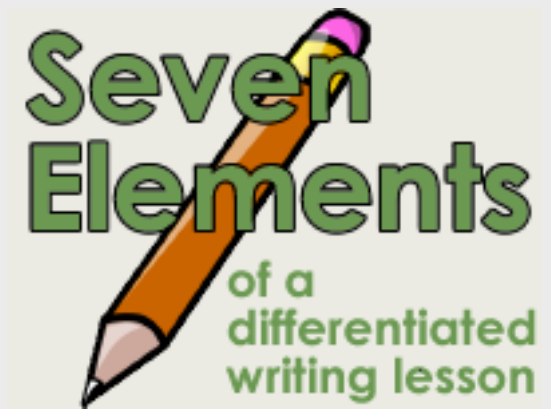
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.

In chapter 3 of Lord of the Flies, two characters describe the same exact same setting (the unexplored jungle); one sees the jungle as a dangerous place; the other describes the jungle as a beautiful and mysterious place. Unique!

Students could think of a setting—a real one or an imaginary one—and then think of two characters who would feel different about the place. They could write about the same setting from two different perspectives, showing how differently the two see things.



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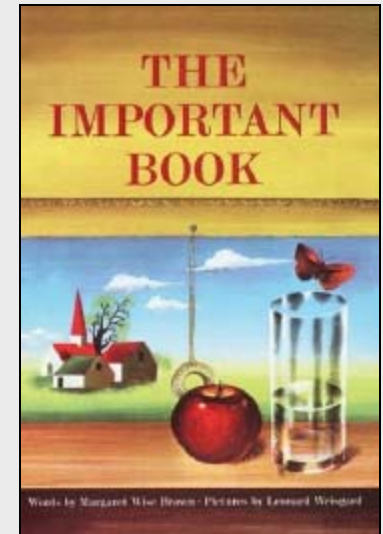
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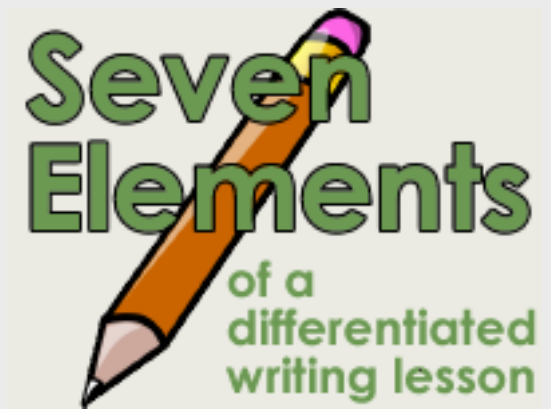
This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can “borrow” to write about their own unique ideas.

Margaret Wise Brown’s The Important Book is probably the most widely used “structure mentor text.” It provides a simple-to-follow pattern that is repeated on every page, each page exploring a different topic: wind, apples, etc.

Students can write “Important Book-inspired” passages about any topics of study—science, history, geography—or about more personal topics they have a connection to. The book’s very safe structure can be used to write about any topic. If you don’t know this book, ask a colleague.



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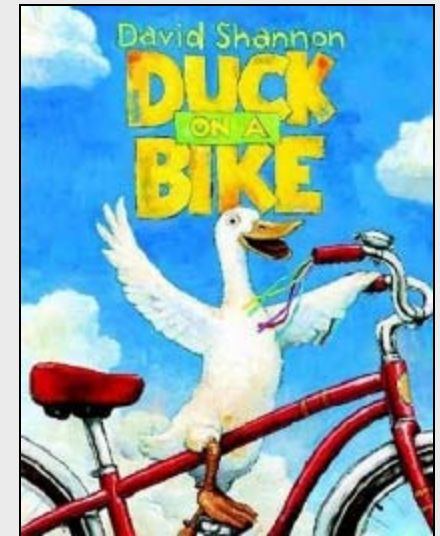
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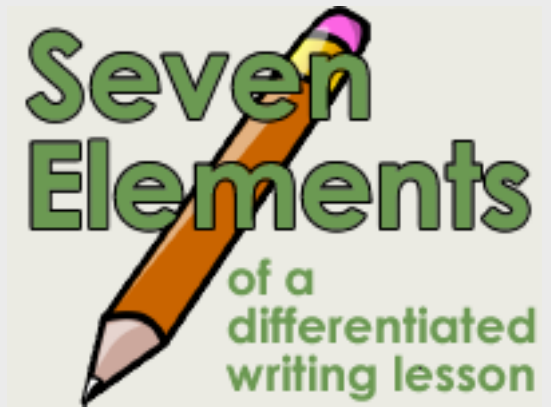
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Stories like Duck on a Bike utilize storytellers’ “series of three” pattern (remember Goldilocks?) In this story, a Duck rides a bike across the barnyard; 3 different animals each stop, observe, and make three different commentaries.

Students can use this story’s pattern to create an original story about pretty much anything: something unusual can happen, and three different animals or characters all have a moment to react to it. Add an introduction and a conclusion, and you have a complete story!



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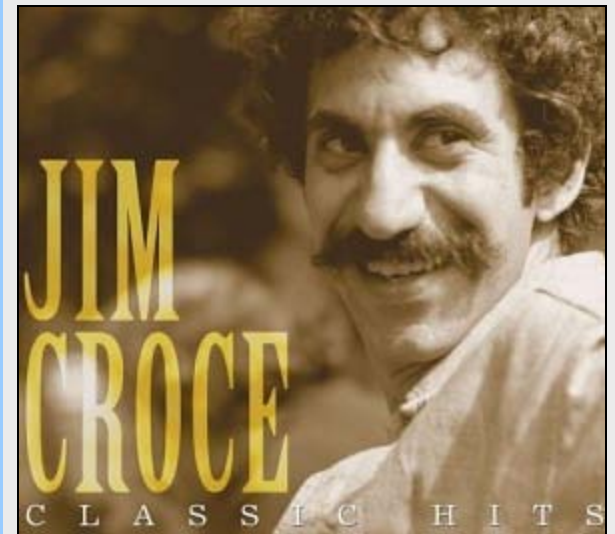
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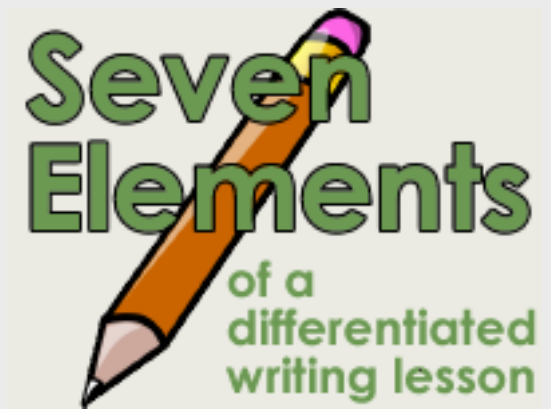
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Jim Croce's song, “I Gotta Name” has three different stanzas. Each song stanza focuses on a different thing the singer carries around with him as he walks down the “road of life.” The three things are: a name, a song, and a dream.

Students can create original three-stanza poems about walking down “life's road.” Each stanza of the poem can explore one important item the poet plans to carry with him/her as they “take on the world” when they become adults or independent.



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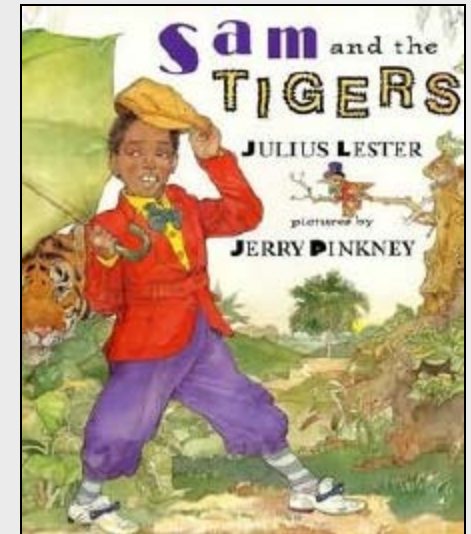
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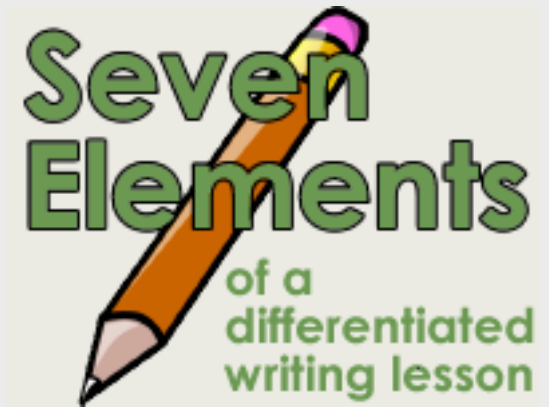
This mentor text contains well-crafted writing with techniques that can be discussed and imitated by student writers.

Julius Lester's Sam and the Tigers contains wonderful color similes, fresh and lively, not the forced similes our students sometimes write when we ask them to revise. Each piece of Sam's clothing is described with this type of simile.

Students can analyze and discuss what makes the similes in this book "fresh" and "not forced." They can then write something new (a color poem, perhaps) or revise a piece of writing, making sure to use fresh similes that Julius Lester would be proud to know he inspired from them.



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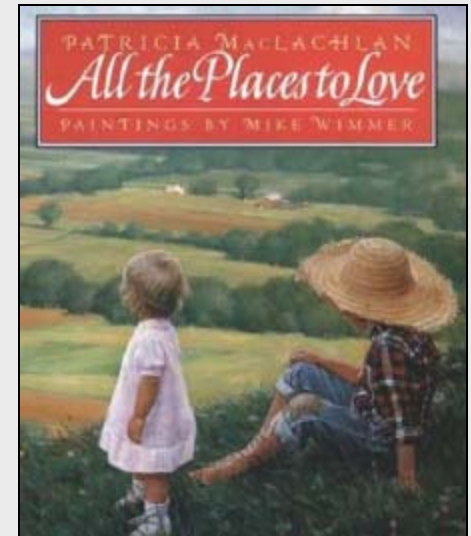
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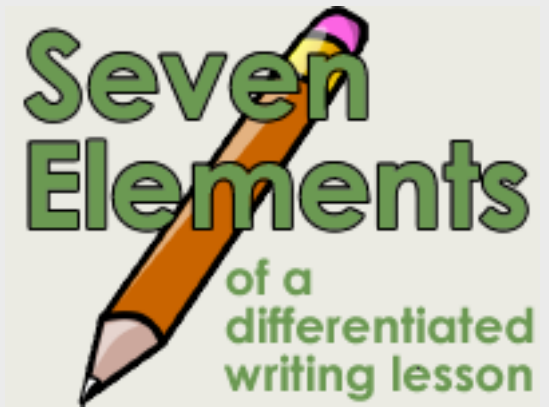
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Anything by Patricia MacLachlan is just amazingly well-crafted. In All the Places to Love, one of the techniques used when describing her childhood home in the country is to begin her sentences with a variety of prepositions.

Students can analyze and discuss how beginning some sentences with prepositions (instead of using *I* and *the* all the time) can create a series of sentences that have more flow to them. Students can revise a setting description, changing just some of the sentences to begin this way.



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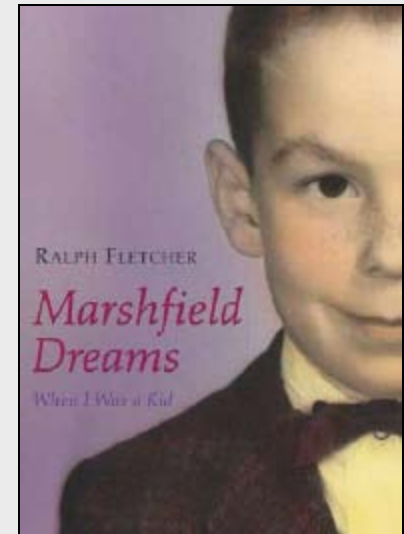
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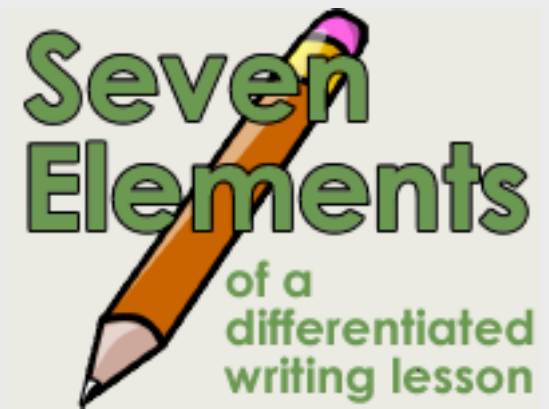
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Ralph Fletcher's Marshfield Dreams is his autobiography. One style technique Fletcher is so skilled with is his use of subtle alliteration. His descriptions very subtly place verbs and adjectives together so the sounds play off one another.

Students can analyze and discuss *any* of the short chapters from this book, looking for instances of subtle alliteration. They can then be prompted to look in their own writing for places where subtle alliteration would add to the writing, perhaps making it more fun to read aloud.



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Mentor Text, your homework assignment: If you come to my workshop with a mentor text from your classroom bookshelf, we will do some very interesting things with it. *If* you can bring an example of *all three types*, I'll give you a WritingFix pen to take home with you! 😊 Will a small bribe work with this audience? 😊

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